

The Arizona Early Intervention Program

The Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) is the interagency system of early intervention for families and their children, birth to three years old, with disabilities or developmental delays. The mission of the Arizona Early Intervention Program is to enhance the capacity of families to support their infants and toddlers with delays or disabilities to thrive in their homes and communities.

The State Structure

The Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C (P.L.105-17). The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section (§) 303.11 states, “Early Intervention Program means the total effort in a State that is directed at meeting the needs of children eligible under this part and their families.” The Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) encompasses the activities of the AzEIP participating agencies, families, the Interagency Coordinating Council, and the private, public, and tribal programs providing services and supports for families with children who have disabilities or developmental delays.

AzEIP is implemented through the coordinated activities of the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB), the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). These five State agencies are the AzEIP participating agencies and have entered into an Interagency Agreement that describes the role of each agency in AzEIP. Within the Arizona Early Intervention Program, each AzEIP participating agency has one or more specific roles. Combined, the efforts of the AzEIP participating agencies constitute the comprehensive statewide system of early intervention services.

As the governor-appointed Lead Agency, DES fulfills specific roles and functions as described by IDEA, Part C. DES created the office of Arizona Early Intervention Program within DES (DES/AzEIP) to fulfill Lead Agency responsibilities. While DES/AzEIP is involved in direct service provision through contracts, the primary role of DES/AzEIP is the administration, supervision, and monitoring of AzEIP, to ensure that Arizona implements a comprehensive, coordinated system of early intervention services that complies with Federal and State statutes.

While DES is the Lead Agency in Arizona, the AzEIP participating agency that assumes the lead role in the coordination and provision of services for a family is the primary service agency (a.k.a. primary agency) for that family. The primary service agency is determined by the needs and eligibility of each family.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security has the dual role of being an “AzEIP participating agency” and the “Lead Agency.” As an AzEIP participating agency, DES, most notably the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), is the largest provider of services and supports for families enrolled in AzEIP. The Division of Developmental Disabilities is a “division” within DES, rather than an agency unto itself. Therefore, DES is an AzEIP participating agency and DDD participates in AzEIP as a division within DES, not as an independent AzEIP participating agency.

The Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) advises and assists DES/AzEIP in managing and implementing a comprehensive system of early intervention services; it is not a governing or regulatory entity. ICC members are appointed by the Governor and represent families, State agencies, providers, institutes of higher education, legislators, physicians and others involved in supporting young children with special needs and their families. The ICC has established four standing committees to assist in fulfilling its role. The four committees, each of which reports to the ICC, are (1) executive, (2) personnel preparation, (3) evaluation and monitoring, and (4) policy and legislation. Community members are always encouraged to participate on these committees.

The Local Structure

DES/AzEIP contracts with local program coordinators to identify and, when possible, resolve local coordination and implementation issues. Program coordinators assist DES/AzEIP to identify local AzEIP strengths, needs, and resources, and to facilitate the provision of training and technical assistance to address identified barriers. Program coordinators also facilitate local public awareness and child find. Local program coordinators work closely with DES/AzEIP in the development of AzEIP policies and procedures to ensure that they are clear, relevant, and feasible. Many of these tasks are accomplished through program coordinators’ work with local management teams.

Local management team members include the AzEIP program coordinator, local management-level staff or designees of the AzEIP participating agencies, families, and local early intervention providers. In addition, advocacy organizations and community-based programs involved with families and young children, such as child care, Early Head Start, Healthy Families, health plans, and Indian Health Services, are often members of these teams. Management teams do not establish policy, but are involved in development and application of proposed policy. The local management team provides a forum for individuals fulfilling a variety of roles within AzEIP to meet and discuss the local implementation of AzEIP, identify and resolve specific issues, disseminate information, and build relationships. Local program coordinators are the primary liaisons between DES/AzEIP and local management teams; they assist management teams to identify system issues and recurring themes, and to communicate these to DES/AzEIP.

Service coordinators and early intervention providers, including therapists, educators, parent advisors, and others, have direct contact with families and participate in the initial planning process, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) development, implementation, and review, and transition planning. The relationship between families and their service coordinators and early intervention providers has the most significant impact on families’ AzEIP experience.

Therefore, DES/AzEIP and AzEIP participating agency activities are directed toward ensuring that AzEIP structure, policy, and resources support service coordinators and providers to work effectively with families so as to maximize the benefit of early intervention for families.

AzEIP Eligibility Criteria

The State of Arizona defines as eligible, a child between birth and 36 months of age who is developmentally delayed or has an established condition, which has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay.

A child is considered to be developmentally delayed when s/he has not reached 50% of the developmental milestones, expected at her/his chronological age, in one or more of the following areas:

- cognitive development
- physical development, including vision and hearing,
- communication development
- social or emotional development
- self-help/adaptive development

Established conditions that have a high probability of developmental delay include, but are not limited to:

chromosomal abnormalities	metabolic disorders
significant auditory impairment	neural tube defects
intraventricular hemorrhage, grades 3 or 4	periventricular leukomalacia
cerebral palsy	hydrocephalus
significant visual impairment	failure to thrive
severe attachment disorders	

For more information contact

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